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12 January 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: All OCI Employees

SUBJECT : Changes in Fitness Reporting System

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1. CIA Personnel Notice [REDACTED] 3 December 1969, announced certain changes in the adjectival ratings and in the evaluating process of the fitness reporting system. In the adjectival rating scale, the former weak and adequate have been replaced with unsatisfactory and marginal, with proficient, strong, and outstanding remaining as before. The Personnel Notice provides new definitions for the five rating adjectives. In the past there has been a tendency to inflate performance ratings and thus reduce their usefulness. I think this is a propitious time to introduce more realism into the rating process. To make sure that everyone in OCI understands, I shall explain in the following paragraphs how these ratings will be interpreted henceforth by the OCI Career Service Board.

2. There are two quite fundamental considerations governing performance evaluations which need to be restated. First in rating a person's performance of specific duties which he is assigned, the duties should be thought of as primary, secondary, tertiary, etc. In arriving at the overall rating, the supervisor should take account of this ranking and give greater weight to the more important duties than to the less important. Second, there is sometimes a tendency to overrate a person as he rises in grade. This tendency can be avoided by considering each person in terms of his grade, length of service in the job, and potential.

3. In stating how the OCI Career Service Board interprets the five adjectival ratings in the new terminology, I prefer to begin with the median rating--Proficient. I do this because, I regard that rating as a sort of bench mark against which the other ratings are calibrated and because I look on it as the required rating for acceptability in OCI. A Proficient employee is one who makes a contribution to the OCI effort--whose performance is satisfactory. But I think that there are degrees of proficiency which should be reflected in the fitness report in the narrative comments (Section C of the report). A person can be rated a "P" if his performance is

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Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and  
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only acceptably proficient; i.e., not poor enough to warrant the next lower rating but not good enough to be exciting. A higher degree of proficiency could be called commendable proficiency--a performance which is dependable and which is recognized as a distinct contribution to the Office's effort. To earn this, none of the employee's specific duties would be rated below proficient and perhaps one would be rated strong. The highest "P" rating could be called high proficiency, which denotes a gratifying performance including the application of considerable imagination and initiative to the job. An employee in this category might well be expected to move up on the rating scale soon.

4. Because I regard a "P" rating really as three ratings, I would expect the majority of OCI personnel, professional and clerical alike, to fall into this category. In using the narrative comments to make the distinction by degree, the supervisor can indicate to the employee and the Career Service Board whether the performance is improving, deteriorating or stagnating. The Board considers that the acceptable level for career development actions, including promotions, lies within the "P" rating.

5. Because the majority of people will be rated "P" under the new system, a substantial number--perhaps half or more--of those rated Strong under the old system will drop to "P" even though their job performance remains unchanged. To make certain that this is clearly understood, the narrative comments will explain that the drop results from the new rating system and a new OCI rating policy. A stamped imprint will be placed on the Fitness Report to indicate that the rating was made under a new OCI policy. In addition, a copy of this memorandum will be placed in every employee's personnel folder.

6. A Strong rating--above Proficient-- is awarded for the level of performance sought, but not too often reached, from experienced personnel in all grades. A person earning this rating should stand out clearly among his colleagues as one with exceptional qualities of substantive grasp, initiative, flexibility, dependability, and leadership or leadership potential. Supervisors and the Career Service Board should have no hesitation in having a Strong-rated employee represent OCI anywhere, commensurate with his grade and mission. Although OCI has a good many well qualified people, because of this new rating system, I should think that probably no more than about 25 percent of OCI's employees would qualify for an "S" rating. Occasionally a person may be awarded an "S" rating for exceptional performance in a single duty, such as service in a crisis task force or preparation of an NIS section.

7. The topmost fitness rating--Outstanding--is to be reserved for a very few people. It will be given to employees whose performance

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in their jobs is without question superior in all respects in the view of their supervisors and reviewing officials. When an OCI employee is deemed deserving of an overall "O" rating for the first time, he will receive appropriate recognition by the Career Service Board.

8. Below the Proficient rating is the Marginal category. Because OCI attempts to recruit personnel with good promise and succeeds for the most part, I expect that not very many will be rated as Marginal. For those few who are, the rating will be interpreted as indicating a failure by the employee to measure up to OCI's minimum performance standards. It will signify that the person has deficiencies of such nature that energetic remedial action should be undertaken at once. The deficiencies and the recommended corrective actions will be specified in the narrative section of the Fitness Report. The employee will also be given a separate memorandum spelling out in greater detail the faults in his performance and the proposed remedies. This memorandum, prepared by the supervisor in consultation with his superiors, will stipulate a time limit for overcoming the deficiencies, at the end of which the supervisor will prepare either a special fitness report which will rate the employee as Proficient or a memorandum warning him that if he does not succeed in 90 days an Unsatisfactory fitness report will be filed.

9. I believe that an Unsatisfactory Fitness Report rating of an individual in OCI should call for mandatory separation from the Office, if not for a recommendation that he be separated from the Agency. If Marginal rating cases are handled by the procedures described in the preceding paragraph, the individual will have been given a fair opportunity to prove himself worthy of retention in the Office. If he fails to make the grade, the "U" fitness report will serve to warn him that steps are being taken to terminate his OCI employment. There will, I am sure, be few if any of these cases.

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